

Drug Abuses among College Students

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Abstract:

Drug abuse among college students has become very common now. College students make up one of the largest groups of drug abusers nationwide. Young people (ages 18 to 24) are already at a heightened risk of addiction. Those who are enrolled in a full-time college programme are twice as likely to abuse drugs and alcohol than those who don't attend college. College has grown as a risk factor for marijuana initiation (Richard, 2017). Starting out in college produces some natural social anxiety for many students. The temptation to drink is strong because college students overwhelmingly find that alcohol makes socializing easier. In most of the cases the routine drinking to have fun leads to addiction. The study is an attempt to assess the drug abuses among college students. The study aims to identify the number of beginners and regular users, the reasons behind the use of drugs, the most used drug among college students, the main source of drugs for the students and to know their awareness about the harmful effects of the drugs.

Key words: Drug abuse, regular users of drugs, college students

Introduction

Adolescence is a crucial period for the beginning and experimenting new things. The college students make up one of the largest groups of drug abusers nationwide. Globally, the situation of drug abuse in adolescence is becoming a health problem and is reaching at alarming position in India and the young people (ages 18-24) are already at a heightened risk of addiction (<https://>

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www.addictioncenter.com/college/). Substance abuse have been receiving attention in developing countries like India because of changing trends in the prevalence of substance use and the rising magnitude of the problem. When the adolescents first experiment with drugs, people perceive that it has much adverse effects over their life and if continuous it may become necessity for user to feel normal. They may continue to take drugs even though it may cause tremendous problems for themselves. The drug abuse is an illness which can be characterized as destructive use of substance that causes many serious health related & social behavior problems (<http://iasir.net/AIJRHASSpapers/AIJRHASS16-244.pdf>).

Drug is any chemical substance derived from plants, animals or mineral resources, which is used for internal application to the human body in the treatment of diseases, to reduce pain or to modify the functions of the various system of the body. The problem of drug abuse has been on the increase in the recent years. Drug is supposed to be dispersed by pharmacists with a doctor's prescription and usage of drug can be through any of the following; injection, insertion, inhalation, massaging or application on open wounds and cuts. The main purpose of drugs should in reality be directed to its medical functions and it should be used strictly according to the prescription of medical doctors, but in most cases, people use drug without the prescription of medical doctors. This is referred to as drug abuse. In some cases, these drugs are used wrongly or misused that is using drugs for other purposes rather than what it is meant for. There are other cases where some people get themselves involved in the use of a particular drug so much that they cannot live without such drugs. In this case, such a person is said to be addicted to that drug.

Binge drinking, prescription drug abuse and Recreational drug use are very common in college campuses. Four out of five college students drink alcohol. Heavy use of alcohol appears to be higher in college students than non-college peers (Schulenberg., et.al. 2016)

Nearly half of students who drink have reported binge drinking (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.). College students as a group are

considered high-risk for the development of eating disorders. 25 percent of all college students struggle with an eating disorder (National Institute of Mental Health.)

Drugs gives the students an out of the world feeling. Also it is very dangerous because it harmfully affect the physical and psychological condition of students and leads to addiction and diseases. So it is important to identify the popular drugs and trends of using.

Drug abuse is also known as substance abuse. Drug use becomes drug abuse if it is consumed in amounts or with methods which are harmful to the individual (www.archives.drugabuse.gov). Some of the commonly used drugs are marijuana, hashish, heroine, opium, amphetamine, methamphetamine, ketamine, salvia divinorum etc. (www.casacolumbia.org)

Factors Leading to Drug Abuse

The high rates of drug abuse among college students can be attributed to a number of factors, including:

1) **Stress**- Students who are facing the high demands of coursework, part-time jobs, internships, social obligations and more, many turn to drugs as a way to cope.

2) **Course load**- More students are taking stimulants, such as Adderall, to help them stay awake long enough to study or complete assignments by their due dates. And too often, these prescription drugs are obtained without a legitimate prescription.

3) **Curiosity**- College students are exploring many new aspects of their lives in personal and professional realms. It's not uncommon that self-exploration can dip them into drug experimentation.

4) **Peer pressure**- College students who are surrounded by other people experimenting with recreational and performance-enhancing drugs are more likely to try these substances for themselves (<https://www.addictioncenter.com/college/>).

Causes of Substances Abuse:

The reasons for the abusive of substances may vary from person to person and more then one reasons could be responsible for it. Causes of substance abuse can be as followed:(www.SubstanceAbuseCausesAndConsequences.pdf)

1. Social factors:

- Peer pressure (One of the most important causes)
- Role-Modeling/imitation
- Easy availability
- Conflicts (usually intrafamilial)
- Cultural/Religious reasons
- Lack of social or familial support
- Social attitude
- Celebrations
- Rapid urbanization

2. Psychological Factors:

- Curiosity
- As a novelty
- Social rebelliousness (disobedience)
- Early initiation
- Poor control
- Sensation seeking (Feeling high)
- Low self-esteem (Anomie)
- Poor stress management
- Childhood loss or trauma
- As a relief from fatigue or boredom
- To escape reality
- No interest in conventional goals.
- Psychological distress

3. Biological Factors:

- Family history, genetic predisposition
- Pre-existing psychiatric or personality disorder, or a medical disorder
- Reinforcing effects of drugs
- Withdrawal effects and craving
- Biochemical factors

Risk Factors and Protective Factors of Drug Abuse

Many people get addicted to harmful substances at a young age itself. This can continue into adulthood. A large percentage of people in recovery at drug and alcohol rehab centers consists of young adults.

Abusing harmful substances such as heroin, cocaine and alcohol negatively severely the physical and mental health of a teenager. Drug and alcohol abuse may lead to various other complications.

Some of the problems drugs and alcohol abuse can cause the life of a teenager or young adult include the following (<https://www.inspiremalibu.com/blog/alcohol-addiction/effects-of-drug-and-alcohol-abuse-on-teenagers/>):

(a) Learning Problems

Drug abuse can negatively affect the memory of teenagers which may lead to poor academic performance and difficulty memorizing things. The problem may deteriorate as a person grows older.

(b) Social problems

Teenagers who abuse drugs are likely to suffer from various social problems. They may have difficulty in relating to their peers, and are more likely to show anti-social behavior. The “rebellious” behavior of teens is sometimes associated with drug and alcohol abuse. There are chances that teenagers who abuse drugs are likely to steal and get into physical fights with others.

(c) Risky Sexual Behavior

Teenagers and young adults who abuse drugs and alcohol are more likely

to indulge in risky sexual behavior. Evidence has shown that young people who abuse drugs are less likely to use protection during sex and are more likely to have sex with strangers. This considerably increases the chances of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and teen pregnancy.

Considering all the possible problems, it's essential for parents to play a proactive role when it comes to making sure their children stay away from illegal drugs and other harmful substances. The first step is to talk with kids and have an open relationship with them. Parents may not always like what their kids are doing, but they should accept that problems will arise at some. Being open and honest with each other might resolve the dangerous problems.

Studies over the past two decades have tried to determine the origins and pathways of drug abuse and addiction—how the problem starts and how it progresses. Many factors have been identified that help differentiate those more likely to abuse drugs from those less vulnerable to drug abuse. Factors associated with greater potential for drug abuse are called “risk” factors, while those associated with reduced potential for abuse are called “protective” factors (<https://www.drugabuse.gov>)

1. In the Family

Children's earliest interactions occur within the family and can be positive or negative. For this reason, factors that affect early development in the family are probably the most crucial.

Major Risk Factors in Family:

- Lack of mutual attachment and nurturing by parents or caregivers;
- Ineffective parenting;
- A chaotic home environment;
- Lack of a significant relationship with a caring adult; and
- A caregiver who abuses substances, suffers from mental illness, or engages in criminal behavior.

Protective Factors in Family:

- A strong bond between children and their families;

- Parental involvement in a child's life;
- Supportive parenting that meets financial, emotional, cognitive, and social needs;
- Clear limits and consistent enforcement of discipline

2). Outside the Family

Other risk factors relate to the quality of children's relationships in settings outside the family, such as in their schools, with their peers, teachers, and in the community. Difficulties in these settings can be crucial to a child's emotional, cognitive, and social development.

Some of these risk factors are:

- Inappropriate classroom behavior, such as aggression and impulsivity.
- Academic failure.
- Poor social coping skills.
- Association with peers with problem behaviors, including drug abuse;
- Mis-perceptions of the extent and acceptability of drug-abusing behaviors in school, peer, and community environments

Protective Factors outside the Family

- Age-appropriate parental monitoring of social behavior, including establishing curfews, ensuring adult supervision of activities outside the home, knowing the child's friends, and enforcing household rules
- Success in academics and involvement in extracurricular activities
- Strong bonds with pro-social institutions, such as school and religious institutions
- Acceptance of conventional norms against drug abuse.

In a study conducted in US (Arria 2017) it was found that Marijuana was the most commonly used drug in every year of the study, with the highest annual prevalence estimates in Year 3 (47%wt). In Year 8, when the modal age of participants was 25, 29%wt used marijuana during the past year. Nonmedical use of prescription drugs was more prevalent during college than in the

later years of the study. Although the prevalence of cocaine and ecstasy use was low (cumulative prevalence estimates of 17%wt and 13%wt, respectively), incidence for these drugs was particularly high in the later years of the study.

Substance use by American young people has proven to be a rapidly changing phenomenon, requiring frequent assessments and reassessments. Since the mid-1960s, when it burgeoned in the general youth population, illicit drug use has remained a major concern for the nation. Smoking, drinking, and illicit drug use are leading causes of morbidity and mortality during adolescence as well as later in life. How vigorously the nation responds to teenage substance use, how accurately it identifies the emerging substance abuse problems, and how well it comes to understand the effectiveness of policy and intervention efforts largely depend on the ongoing collection of valid and reliable data. MTF is uniquely designed to generate such data in order to provide an accurate picture of what is happening in this domain and why, and the study has served that function well for the past 42 years. Policy discussions in the scientific literature and media, in government, education, public health institutions, and elsewhere have been informed by the ready availability of extensive and consistently accurate information from the study relating to a large and ever-growing number of substances.

Methodology

Objectives:

The objectives of the study are the following:-

- To identify the number of beginners and regular users of drug.
- To know the reasons behind the use of drugs.
- To assess the most used drug among college students.
- To identify the main source of drugs for the college students.
- To know their awareness about the harmful effects of the drugs.

Two hundred college students [boys] from ten different colleges of Kottayam District were selected for the study by using convenient sampling. The survey method was used in the study since it is easy to gather information. A self prepared validated questionnaire was used for collecting data. The questionnaire consists of two parts: the first part -General Information to elicit the

general data about the college student and the second part contains twenty three questions which is been categorized into two groups. Twelve questions for beginners and eleven questions for regular users.

Important findings:

- **Number of Beginners and Regular Users:-** The number of beginners and regular users of drug among college students is as follows.

Table 1. Number of Beginners and Regular Users of Drugs

Types of Users	Number (Total N=200)	Percentage (%)
Regular Users	24	12
Beginners	96	48
Non Users	80	40

The study reported that the number of beginners (48%) is higher than that of regular users (12%). Thus the study reports that the number of beginners is more than the regular users.

2. Reasons for beginning the use of drugs

The reason for beginning drug abuse is tabulated and illustrated as follows.

Table 2. Reasons for beginning the use of drugs

Reasons	Number Total N=120)	Percentage (%)
Friend’s Influence	110	91.7
Enthusiasm	6	5
Experimentation	4	3.3

The study reports that (91.7%) of college students try drugs at first time by the influence of their friends. Only (5%) of samples begins with an enthusiasm and remaining (3.3%) as an experimentation.

Hence the study reports that College students begin to use drugs due to the influence of their friends.

3. Most commonly used drugs among College students

The most commonly used drugs among college students is displayed in table 3.

Table.3. Most commonly used drugs among College students

Drug	No. of Users				Total No. (N- 120)	Percentage (%)
	Beginners		Regular users			
	No	%	No	%		
Marijuana	92	77	24	20	116	97
Hashish	60	50	16	13	76	63
LSD	0	0	8	6.6	8	6.6
Unknown	8	6.6	0	0	8	6.6

Table 3 shows that 97 % students use marijuana, 63% students use Hashish , 6.6 % use LSD and 6.6 % does not know what drug they are using. Thus the study reveals that marijuana is the most commonly used drug among college students.

4. Sources of Drugs

The sources of drugs for college students is highlighted below.

Table 4. Sources of Drugs

Source	Number Total N=120)	Percentage (%)
Friends	114	95
Medical Representatives	6	5

The study put forward that the major source of drugs is from friends (95%) compared to medical representatives (5%).

Thus the study reports that the main source of drugs for the college students are their friends.

5. Students Awareness about the Harmful Effect of Drugs

Students Awareness about the Harmful Effect of Drugs. The study shows that (100%) college students are well aware of the harmful effects of drugs.

Thus the study reports that all the students are aware about the harmful effects of drugs.

Conclusions:-

- The number of regular and non users is limited than that of beginners.
- College students begin to use drugs by the influence of their friends compared to enthusiasm and experimentation.
- Marijuana is the most commonly used drug among college students compared to hashish and lysergic acid diethyl amid.
- The main sources of drugs for college students are their friends.
- All samples are well aware of the harmful effects of drugs.

Scope of the study

Today's college students face a range of drug temptations never envisioned by earlier generations of students. This may harm the adolescent group physically, emotionally and psychologically. The study is going to be of great importance to the adolescents, parents guardians and the society at large. It will enable the students to be aware about the dangers involved in drug abuse, this will go a long way to help those students who are already in one way or the other abusing drug to reconsider their ways . It also offer solutions to their problems of drug abuse . It will help to enlighten or educate them on the bad effects of drug abuse. The study will also help to educate parents on the effect of drug. The study is helpful to know the sources and it can help in reducing

the drug abusers by blocking the sources. The result can be used by college authorities, police, parents, child guidance and drug addiction centres where they can take necessary steps or precautions, such as strengthening the counseling services, laws, and parent and teacher child interaction. So the present study is an eye opener to our present society.

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